

A MESSAGE FROM . . .



BOB RILEY
Governor, State of Alabama



TIMOTHY C. BOYCE
State Forester

Since September 11, 2001 we have watched numerous units of our state's National Guard and Reserves being called to active duty. First they answered the call for homeland security and then to wars in far away Afghanistan and Iraq. We have all seen the tearful farewells on television or passed the long green National Guard convoys on our roads and interstates and felt that lump rise in our throats.

Currently Alabama has around 7,000 National Guard and Reserve troops deployed in "Operation Noble Eagle," "Operation Enduring Freedom," and "Operation Iraqi Freedom." Historically, Alabama and her sister southern states have supplied more soldiers than any other area of the country. Clay County in Alabama has the distinction of having more troops currently deployed than any other county in the nation.

These men and women represent the finest Alabama has to offer. Before donning their camouflage and combat gear they were little league coaches, Sunday school teachers, mayors, tradesmen, Girl Scout leaders, firefighters, policemen, and store clerks. But more importantly they are also mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, and sons and daughters.

It is now time for the rest of us to act in supporting our soldiers. Although we can't replace them and the jobs or roles they filled, we can pick up and carry on where they left off until their return. For many, it means finding a little more time in the day, staying a little longer, arriving a little earlier, taking on another position or tackling a new task. It is also important that we show our support and respect for these hometown heroes by lending our time and support to the family members left behind. Sometimes war can be the toughest on those waiting at home.

In any trial or hardship our state has ever experienced, Alabamians have joined together in support and love for not only our family and friends, but for the neighbors in our community and even the unknown man or woman on the other side of town. As Alabamians, we are not only known for our hospitality, but for our compassionate hearts as well. I know that we will get through this time of trial and we will be better for it. 🇺🇸

A historical and monumental event took place recently in north Alabama. This event will change forestry in Alabama in the years to come. The Center for Forestry and Ecology program at Alabama A&M University in Normal, Alabama, received accreditation by the Society of American Foresters. They became the first Historically Black College or University (HBCU) to be accredited by a professional forestry association.

In the past few years, the Alabama Forestry Commission has worked closely with administrators, faculty, and students to help make this happen. Our informal relationship began in the 1976 school year. The relationship was formalized eight years ago when one of our foresters was asked to serve on the program's curriculum committee. Four years ago, we became a full partner in the forestry program's Center of Excellence. The Forestry and Ecology program has only three partners, the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, the Alabama Forestry Commission, and International Paper.

A few years ago the Alabama Forestry Commission began a very active minority outreach program and students at Alabama A&M are a very important part of that program. The Commission has hired seven students from Alabama A&M as summer interns and we currently have five foresters working for us who were graduates of the forestry program.

In the past five years, Alabama A&M has graduated more African-American foresters than all other universities combined. With accreditation, many doors will be opened to African-American foresters that were before closed. They will be able to apply to be registered foresters in Alabama and other states that require registration as a requirement to practice forestry. They will also have better opportunities to compete for places in graduate programs at other colleges and universities as well as have better opportunities with forestry industry and federal and state land management agencies.

Congratulations to Alabama A&M University on your accreditation. I continue to pledge the Alabama Forestry Commission's support in this new chapter of our partnership. 🇺🇸